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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 003184

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PTER ASEC PREL CASC KCRM EG EAC
SUBJECT: EGYPT: EAC MEETING FOLLOWING APRIL 30 SUICIDE
BOMBING AND SHOOTING INCIDENT IN CAIRO

REF: A. CAIRO 3183
 1B. CAIRO 2956
 1C. CAIRO 2898
 1D. CAIRO 2799
 1E. CAIRO 2773
 1F. CAIRO 2745
 1G. CAIRO 2744
 1H. CAIRO 2743

11. (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified, please handle accordingly. Not for Internet distribution.

12. (SBU) On May 1, the Charge d'Affaires convened post's Emergency Action Committee to review details of the April 30 suicide bombing in downtown Cairo and shooting incident (ref A), as well as to evaluate the Mission's security posture and appropriate Consular response. Attending the meeting were RSO, ORA, CONS, DAO, OMC, CLO, DEA, LEGAT, ECPO, RMO, NAMRU, PAO, MSG, MGMT, and USAID.

Evaluating the Facts of the April 30 attacks

13. (SBU) Opening the meeting, the Charge and RSO reviewed the latest information concerning the nature of the April 30 incidents. In the first incident, an Egyptian male was killed by a bomb he was carrying. The male has been identified by Egyptian security contacts as Ehab Yousry Yassin Ali, sought in connection with the April 7 bombing in the Khan El Khalili bazaar. (Note. This individual was misidentified in an earlier government statement and in ref A as "Ihab Idris." End note.) Seven individuals near him (including four foreign tourists) were injured. The GOE reports that the bomb detonated when the bomber jumped from an overpass onto Abdel Moneim Riyad Square near the Egypt Museum. In the second, apparently related, incident, two women were killed in a shooting. The details of the second incident near the Citadel remain vague; the two women (according to press reports the sister and fiance of the April 30 suicide bomber) may have fired on a tourist bus with a handgun. They were then shot by police or, according to another account, one woman shot the other and then herself. Reports indicate that both women died as a result of the incident, one at the site of the attack and the other later at a local hospital. Both events occurred near popular tourist sites in Cairo.

14. (SBU) The RSO made clear that many details of the day's events, including motives and intentions, remain unclear and under investigation by Egyptian authorities. There are strong indications that the April 30 incidents are related to the April 7 bombing at the Khan Al Khalili bazaar and that the individuals involved in both attacks are closely linked. Police are still reportedly searching for the brother of the April 30 bomber who has been identified as Mohamed Yousry Yassin Ali. Press reports have also referred to an accomplice driver, still at large, for the two women killed. There are also reports that another member of the cell, captured earlier on April 30, told police that the cell had prepared other bombs.

15. (SBU) According to the Egyptian Minister of Health, two Israelis, one Italian, one Swede, and three Egyptians were wounded in the incident near the Egypt Museum, none fatally. The Italian Embassy reported that their citizen is in stable condition after initial surgery to remove shrapnel from the explosion. She is being transported to Italy in the coming day or two to undergo a more sensitive operation to remove debris from her neck. The presence of nails removed from the victims and the site of the April 30 attack indicate a similarly constructed device as that used April 7. There are no reports of American citizens involved in the April 30 incidents.

16. (U) Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif sought to allay fears of a possible resurgence in Islamic extremist violence April 30, commenting publicly his view that the latest attacks "did not represent a pattern." Nazif stated that he

was "positive our society and the security services are able to maintain security and safety." Later the same day, both the Sheikh of Al Azhar and the Egyptian Grand Mufti condemned the attacks, describing them as criminal, loathesome acts. The Muslim Brotherhood also issued a condemnatory statement April 30.

Evaluating the Consular Response and Travel Warning

17. (SBU) The Charge sought comments on the appropriate Embassy response following the April 30 attacks, referring to the April 7 attack as well as the experience of the mid-1990's in Egypt when tourists and tourist sites were specifically and repeatedly targeted by militant groups. Consular noted that the Embassy switchboard and consular duty officer had not received an unusual level of calls or inquiries related to the April 30 incidents, possibly due to the absence of so many expatriates from Cairo over the local four-day holiday weekend. The EAC discussed the tenor and content of warning language for an updated Embassy warden notice. All agreed that repeated terror incidents in the space of a few weeks merited a clear warning to Americans considering travel to Cairo.

18. (SBU) The EAC engaged in considerable discussion on the nature of the threat and the appropriate reaction. The group weighed the unsophisticated nature of the April 7 and April 30 attacks against the uncertainty regarding how successful the GOE has been in eliminating the cell involved and the possibility of copycat attacks or attacks by members of this group who may remain at large. The EAC agreed that new travel advisory language should reference the regional Middle East travel warning already in place and that Americans should be warned to avoid crowds and tourist sites for the next four weeks. The group decided not to change the current, already heightened, security posture for the official Embassy community.

Next Steps

19. (SBU) The Embassy will review all sources of information on the threat to tourists and will convene additional EAC meetings as appropriate. The warden system will be reviewed for its effectiveness, and the embassy website will post any new travel advisory information. The Charge closed the meeting noting that the EAC would need to be vigilant in reviewing the security situation for upcoming visits of American officials and events involving the American community.

Draft Warden Message

10. (U) On May 1, Post delivered the following notice to American citizens registered at the Embassy and also posted the notice on the U.S. Embassy website. Begin text of notice:

Warden Notice:

On Saturday afternoon, April 30th, there were two deadly attacks in Cairo that resulted in serious injury to tourists. One was a bombing just north of the Egyptian Museum and the other a shooting near the Citadel. Seven people (including foreign tourists) were injured in the first attack, and all three assailants in the two attacks are reported to have died. No Americans were injured in either of the two attacks, both of which occurred adjacent to tourist areas.

The Government of Egypt believes that both attacks were linked to the April 7 bombing in the Khan El Khalili bazaar that killed four, including an American. The Egyptian Government further believes that the three incidents were carried out by one small and unsophisticated terror cell that has almost been eliminated. It is difficult for the U.S. Government to independently assess the Egyptian Government's claim concerning the viability of this terror cell.

All U.S. citizens are strongly advised to consider avoiding tourist areas in Cairo until the threat environment becomes clearer. U.S. citizens should not linger amidst crowds of tourists in public areas. In line with the Middle East and North African Public announcement, Americans should continue to be exceedingly careful and maintain a heightened awareness of their surroundings. Any suspicious behavior should be reported to authorities. The Embassy intends to review this advice on May 15, 2005 or before if additional information becomes available.

As the U.S. Government develops information on any potential security threats to U.S. citizens overseas, it shares credible threat information through its consular information

program documents, available on the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov>. For further information, U.S. citizens may call the Embassy's American Citizen Services Unit on 797-2301 during business hours, Sunday to Thursday from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. For emergencies after business hours and on weekends, U.S. citizens can contact the Embassy Duty Officer via the Embassy switchboard on 797-3300.

The Embassy is located at 5 Latin America Street, Garden City, Cairo. General information about Egypt is available at the Embassy's website www.usembassy.egnet.net. The most recent State Department Worldwide Caution Public Announcement, and Middle East and North Africa Public Announcement contain additional security information. These documents can be found at www.travel.state.gov.

Finally, all residents of and visitors to Egypt are urged to register their presence via the Internet at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrshome.asp> to facilitate communications.

End text of message.

Visit Embassy Cairo's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/cairo>

You can also access this site through the State Department's Classified SIPRNET website.

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